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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 002131

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STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CRS, SA/PB, S/CT,
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#) [EAID](#)
SUBJECT: PRT LASHKAR GAH: ASSESSING SANGIN SECURITY

REF: KABUL 2130

Classified By: A/DMC Carol Rodley for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY

11. (C) Over the last two weeks, Helmand Province's Sangin district has seen a spate of violence directed not only at ISAF and Government of Afghanistan (GOA) military forces but also at Afghans with links to those forces or to reconstruction efforts. Taliban attacks have resulted in the deaths of Afghan National Army and Police members, a local mullah, interpreters with links to ISAF, and Afghan drivers of a convoy of ISAF supplies, among others. This environment has made locals reluctant to meet with Afghan and international organizations pursuing reconstruction projects and also has made contractors from outside the district reluctant to work in Sangin. Local sentiment is nevertheless not uniformly welcoming of a Taliban return, and there are ongoing efforts by the Afghan Government and ISAF to stabilize the district and demonstrate the GOA's and international community's commitment to development. END
SUMMARY

Post-operational Violence in Sangin

12. (C) Over the last two weeks Sangin district has seen a spate of violence directed not only at ISAF and Government of Afghanistan (GOA) military forces but also at Afghans with links to those forces or to reconstruction efforts. On June 16, an IED attack near the bazaar in Sangin town killed two Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers and one Afghan National Policeman (ANP). The following day Taliban forces killed a mullah, reportedly due to his pro-Coalition leanings. On June 18, interpreters known to have worked for the Coalition were ambushed near the bazaar, resulting in two deaths and one injury. On/around June 21, a convoy of six trucks bringing supplies to ISAF forces was ambushed in Sangin, and the six Afghan drivers were beheaded. On June 23, an RPG attack on an ISAF forward operating base resulted in the deaths of two Estonian soldiers and injuries to two others

(the first deaths for the Estonians). And on June 24, the son of the interim district police chief in Sangin was kidnapped by the Taliban just south of Sangin and executed.

Pursuing Reconstruction in This Security Environment

¶3. (C) These attacks take place as Task Force Helmand (TFH) and the PRT have engaged provincial and district officials and tribal elders regarding reconstruction projects in the district aimed at winning locals over to the GOA and helping to stabilize the district. TFH has commenced some smaller projects, like refurbishment of district government buildings, but larger reconstruction projects (through TFH or PRT efforts), such as work on schools and clinics, have not started. TFH and PRT confront reluctance among Afghan contractors to undertake projects in Sangin. On the ground to survey the situation, a USAID sub-contractor manager of cash-for-work projects in the district (linked to the Kajaki energy and infrastructure project) has decided that for the time being the area is not secure enough for civilian-led projects to begin. He reported that a number of locals have expressed outrage over the recent civilians deaths following an ISAF air strike in neighboring Nahri Sarraj district (reftel). The locals are reluctant to come to the district government building to discuss reconstruction. (NOTE: Prior to traveling to Sangin, the project manager told PRTOff that one Sangin local with whom he sought to work had received a "visit from the Taliban" the night before, warning him against working with ISAF or internationals. The person declined to assist the sub-contractor. END NOTE.)

¶4. (C) Until the situation permits civilian contractors to

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work in Sangin, thereby permitting work on larger projects, TFH will look for other ways to implement "consent winning" projects. For example, TFH might contract directly with local skilled workers on smaller projects.

Can GOA Forces Bring Stability?

¶5. (C) The GOA has maintained an Afghan National Army (ANA) presence in the district but has struggled to deploy sufficient police forces to Sangin to eventually replace the ANA. Currently there are roughly a few dozen ANP in the district. GOA officials have encountered difficulties with those deployed, including a lack of training and non-payment of wages. (NOTE: It is not entirely clear whether the police deployed are ANP or Auxiliary Police (ANAP) or even whether they are local militia tapped to backfill. The latter would explain the pay problem, as they are not on the government payroll. END NOTE)

¶6. (C) The new Provincial Police Chief, on the ground about a week, is off to an energetic start and has declared his intention to deploy a number of ANAP to the district to support the police already there. They would eventually be replaced by trained ANP. There are also renewed efforts to identify precisely how many ANP and ANAP there are in Helmand, in order to determine how many more can be recruited, trained, and deployed.

Return of the District Governor

¶7. (C) The interim Sangin District Governor, Haji Izatullah, is set to return to the district, following a break of a couple of weeks. His return could reintroduce a much-needed strong GOA presence in the district. He will resume his tribal outreach. Izatullah had arrived claiming to have the support of all the tribes in Sangin and did hold numerous meetings with elders. It now appears he may have overestimated that support. His outreach has been limited to whoever will visit him in the district center. (NOTE:

Governor Wafa has declined to formally appoint Izatullah, who nevertheless predicts he could remain in the position for years. The PRT has encouraged Wafa to consider a formal appointment, which would give Izatullah a salary and perhaps a budget. END NOTE)

Comment

18. (C) The return of Izatullah could reintroduce a much-needed strong GOA presence in the district. While the current situation does not permit reconstruction efforts by civilian contractors, and therefore reconstruction currently cannot act as a driver for stability along with military operations, that situation could change in the coming weeks. Reports of civilian deaths from ISAF bombings in neighboring Nahri Sarraj district, the second in two weeks, will not make it easier to do so.

WOOD